

1. Mahanandamu Cave

This is my translation of a pamphlet about the Mahanandamu Cave in Mandalay Region. The pamphlet's original name is "ပိတ်ချင်းမြောင် မဟာနန္ဒမူလိုက်ဂူတော် ဖြစ်ပေါ်လာပုံ သမိုင်း အကျဉ်း" – "A Brief History of the Origin of the great Mahanandamu Cave Peit-Chin-Myaung." I am grateful to Joah McGee for the source material.

Of supreme merits - Peit Chin Ravine

Dedicating whole life - Many worship (it).

1. Pyin Oo Lwin being its location

The Maha Nandamu Cave of Peit Chin Ravine is in the Mandalay Region, ca. 15 miles north from Pyin Oo Lwin Town, ca. 2 miles east from Wet-Wun-Kyer Village (ဝက်ဝံကျေးရွာ), situated in the map-reference G-188783. The historical Buddha Lain Gu Taw, which is over 1600 feet long, with ca. 20 feet wide cave-opening is the one of the three ravines (in the area) where fresh water flows abundantly. At the time when rocks started to form in this cave, the cave was situated at the bottom of a sea. Because of the movement of lime-stones of sea, there emerged hill-ranges. Ca. 230 to 310 million years ago, almost throughout the Paleolithic Age, in the Taninthari State there were collisions and movements, because of which in the bottom of the sea, in the area of the (Mahanandamu) cave, stones started to gradually build up into hills. Since then these stones that just began to form into hills were penetrated by rain-water and chemically altered so as to start to form into caves. Therefore, it is assumed that the stones inside the cave are from the Devonian Period, 345-395 mil. years ago, and the cave started to form at the end of Carboniferous period and throughout the Permian period, which was some 230 to 310 mil. years ago.

2. History of the name ("recognition & calling of the name & label")

According to the metaphore "among three ravines one ravine will excel", among the three great ravines in this area long ago the herbal 'long pepper' (Piper longum) (ပိတ်ချင်း [peit-chin]) grew on this ravine, and this great ravine was named and known as Peit-Chin Ravine Mahanandamu Great Cave.

From the stratified and segmented surface of the Peit-Chin Ravine Cave there arose rock-caves and there are many beautifully grown hanging ferns due to the lime-stones and rock crevices (moistened) by seeping water. The stream of spring water that leaves from the cave has naturally arisen from all over the place and collected (inside). In certain places the spring-water stream is up to ca. 5 feet deep, and in some places it flows as small waterfalls. Because the spring water occurs naturally and is fresh, it is so pure and cool, that in treatment of eyes it extraordinarily cures ("is used for") itchy eyes, and ("disappearance of") eye pain. That water, if used for bathing, makes skin itchiness and skin-related pain disappear. If draught,

pains inside body subside and disappear. This spring-water is cool in summer, and warm in winter; even if in other places water vaporizes out, the water in the cave does not vaporize. When the rain falls strongly, surrounding waters are muddy, however the water in the cave is pure. Such and other special qualities may be encountered (here).

3. Peit-Chin Golden Hill, the Three Ravines, and the Supreme Cave-Buddha

The surrounding of Peit-Chin Ravine, encircling the hill, has the appearance of a frying pan. Apart from its being situated (relatively) inside the ground, this (cave) is also at a foot of a hill, coincidentally with other natural occurrences:

- three ravines: (1) Peit-Chin Ravine (ပိတ်ချင်းမြောင်း - Ravine of Long Pepper), (2) Wet-Loo Ravine (ဝက်လူးမြောင်း - Ravine of Wallowing Bear), (3) Ta-Yaw Ravine (တရော်မြောင်း - Grewia (shampoo-bark plant) Ravine).

three hills

- (1) Ye-Lan Hill (ရေလမ်းတောင် - Water-Way Hill),
- (2) War-Myin Hill (ငါးမြင်တောင် - Hill of Visible Bamboo),
- (3) Taung-Khaung Hill (တောင်ခေါင်းတောင် - Top-Hill Hill).

three waterfalls

- (1) Thone-Shint Waterfall (သုံးဆင့်ရေတံခွန် - Three-Levels Waterfall),
- (2) Ngar-Dwin-Ji Waterfall (ငါးတွင်းကြီးရေတံခွန် - Waterfall of Big Fish-Pit),
- (3) Ye-Tha-Yauk Waterfall (ရေသရောက်ရေတံခွန် - Waterfall of Coming Water(?)).

three rivulets

- (1) Gae-Laung Rivulet (ဂဲလောင်ချောင်း),
- (2) Peit-Chin Rivulet (ပိတ်ချင်းချောင်း - Rivulet of Long Pepper),
- (3) Ngout-Dwin Rivulet (ငုတ်တွင်းချောင်း - Rivulet of Tree-Stump Pit).

three (natural) pits

- (1) Ngar-Dwin-Ji (ငါးတွင်းကြီး - Big Fish-Pit),
- (2) Ngar-Dwin-Lay (ငါးတွင်းလေး - Little Fish Pit),
- (3) Saneik-Dwin (စနိတ်တွင်း).

three caves

- (1) Hnit-Htat Cave (နှစ်ထပ်ဂူ - Two-Storey Cave),
- (2) Yahanta Cave (Peit-Chin Ravine Cave) (ရဟန္တာဂူ၊ ပိတ်ချင်းမြောင်းလိုက်ဂူ - Arahant's Cave, Cave of Long Pepper Ravine),
- (3) Kyar-Pazat Cave (ကျားပါစပ်ဂူ - Cave of Tiger's Mouth)

three canyons

- (1) Nat-Kambar Canyon (နတ်ကမ်းပါးချောက် - God/Nat's Shore Canyon)
- (2) Kyaik-Hti-Yoe Canyon (ကျိုက်ထီးရိုးချောက် - Canyon of the Golden Rock)
- (3) Ye-Tha-Yauk Canyon (ရေသရောက်ချောက် - Canyon of Coming Water(?))

Thus (the cave) in a hill-foot area coincidentally accumulated natural (occurrences, each) by three.

4. The Chronicle of Name Nandamu

During His life, the Lord Buddha Himself travelled to the Vellabeve Hill (the area of today Pyin Oo Lwin). There, when the Lord Buddha arrived, Cintapaala (စိန္တပါလလုလင်) , a young man who owned a hill-field near the Vellabeve Hill¹, offered the Buddha fruits and cooked rice, and on that occasion the Buddha uttered the prediction (as a result of that offering): "Rivulets, canyons, caves, ravines, three pits and hills, three waterfalls of victory, the Peit-Chin Ravine of supreme merit, is the divine guide to the land of

¹ I couldn't find this name or it's significant part (Vellaba) in the CST4 nor even in the ca. 24 volumed Pali-Myanmar Encyclopedia. It may be combination of "vella" and "eva", meaning "just shaking," "just twisting," or "just bending."

Victory." The young man went to search the place which was in accordance with the prediction, a place where (his practice of) Buddha's teachings (Saasana) will flourish. Searching, the young man Cintapaala found the cave that tallied with the prediction. He decided to build a pagoda in that cave at the foot of hill, out of which a radiated "noble" rays. However, although (he) passed the siblings of the dragon king, who lived in and around the cave, he (Cintapaala) wasn't able to enter the cave. Therefore, living a reasonable distance ("not near not far") from the cave and waiting for (opportunity) to build a pagoda inside the cave, after a certain period of time a sister of the siblings of the dragon king fell in love with the young man Cintapaala. When her brother, the king of dragons, learned about that, he didn't allow the young man Cintapala to enter even the Peit-Chin Ravine. Being a dragon king who enjoyed in Dhamma, he didn't cause any danger (to the young man Cintapaala). However, the human young man Cintapaala, taking the appearance of a rishi, made a built a forest hermitage not far from the cave's plain and dwelled there. From forest he (collected) fossilized teak and carved three statues of Buddha, which he then offered to the dragon king to worship inside the cave. The dragon king accepted them as being from a pure man, a rishi, kept them in the cave and paid respect to them.

During the era of king Anawratha, the queen Saw Mon Hla, when she was returning from Paukan Country, she saw various rays of light shining from Vellabeve Hill's Sosakaing (စိုးကိုင်) locality, at an end of a rainbow.² Because of that, (the queen) gave relics of the Buddha and Arahants to her body-guard royal brother Sat-Naung-Hlar and sent him to investigate (the case). Sat-Naung-Hlar saw the cave and entered it. He visited the three noble statues (of Buddha). It is assumed that he deposited the Buddha's and Arahants' relics in those statues and some of the relics he deposited in the highest three storeys. After a number of years the Buddha's relics "became difficult to find," but the relics of Arahants were found - deposited in the Buddha's statue, which was (previously) three times encircled by the dragon king's (tail) and covered by (the dragon king's hood) and worshiped (by the dragon king). At present the Buddha statues made of teak-fossiles are deposited [so you will never see them] in the Golden Pagoda Koe-Daung-Pyit Kan-Htu-Thut-Khaung (ကိုးထောင်ပြည့် ကံထူထွဋ်ခေါင် ရွှေစေတီ) and Kan-Htu-Dagun 18 Cubits Pagoda (ကံထူးတံခွန် (၁၈)တောင် စေတီတော်) and paid respect (by people).

5. Plane of Three Places, Three Human Worlds, the Axis that Guides All

Excellent Arahant, Worshipped by Good Men Searching and Crossing to Nibbana Together.

It is worth noting, that this "victorious land" was (lastly) the place where wizards moved, that around the area there were various herbs which were pounded into medicines by magicians, and that there are large pounding stones inside the cave (itself). There (still?) are herbs that ordinary people can't know or (even) see, as well as many roots and plants used by alchemists.

Sometimes white-robed pure 'good men', as well as the cave-guarding dragon king with his siblings, may be seen in front of the cave, at night of the full-moon and new-moon days. The fact that the dragon

² The end of the rainbow is the place where a great treasure may be found, say some folklores. Modern science seems to deny the factual basis of those fairy-tales.

king (shows himself) in dream (to those who) determine to pay respect to the cave-pagoda and to commit repairs or embellishments (in the cave), as well as that those who make wish (/pray there) to succeed in "proper livelihood" job [i.e. nothing that would cause or support harm of living beings] have their wish fulfilled - these reports have been received from those who themselves achieved (them).

The Pyin Oo Lwin Township's 'Law and Order Restoration Council' (ပြိမ်းဝပ်ပိပြားအမှု တည်ဆောက်ရေးအဖွဲ့), the military, and the country people joined together and since 8th of March 1989, the second day of Dabaung month in 1350 ME, there is the opportunity to pay respects to the dragon king and (Buddha) statues after (the shrine) was built. Today the (Buddhist) statues and (other) statues throughout the cave, to (people's) delight, overflow with offerings made by many people.

2. The Twelve Kinds of Pagoda in Pāli Scriptures and the Sand Pile Pagoda

In the book "*Cetiyaabheda Sarigahakathā*" by Ashin Issariya (Laṅkādhīpa) (written in Burmese language, printed by Zin Yatana Sarpe, Insein, Myanmar in 2012), in the page 83 there are mentioned 12 kinds of pagoda –

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. with relics (ဓာတ်တော်ရှိသော) | 7. made of jewels (ရတနာ) |
| 2. without relics (ဓာတ်တော်မရှိသော) | 8. made of soil (မြေ) |
| 3. with a cave in front (အပြီးလိုက်မုခ်ရှိသော) | 9. made of bricks (အုတ်) |
| 4. without a cave in front (အပြီးလိုက်မုခ်မရှိသော) | 10. sand pile (သဲပုံ) |
| 5. made of gold (ရွှေ) | 11. made of bones (အရိုး) |
| 6. made of ruby (ပတ္တမြား) | 12. made of thin bamboo strips (ဝါးနီး) |

Each of these is mentioned in Pāli texts, and the direct references are given on the page. The case of sand pagoda is mentioned in Apadāna Pāli vol.1, 7. Sakacintaniyavaggo. It tells us about the Arahant Sakacintaniya, who gained his enlightenment as the result of building a sand pagoda in the name of the Buddha and offered flowers to it. Before he became Arahant, as the result of the flower offering, he was born again and again as the world's monarch, never been born in a state of woe.

In Myanmar the 'sand pagoda festival' (သဲပုံစေတီပွဲ) pertains to the full-moon of Dabaung, i.e. ca. March. It was usually celebrated by the elders of the community, but in the recent times it has disappeared. A group of Burmese people in Singapore attempted to revive it while in Singapore, and this year (2016) celebrated it for the first time in Myanmar. It happened on the 23rd of March 2016 on Ngwe Saung Beach. Perhaps a hundred or more people came to help with the building. The pagoda was left there as it was built. Hard to say what will remain of it next year in March ...



Burmese people building sand pagoda together
(sending buckets of sand by human chain)



Sand pagoda finished, glowing in the night

3. Buddha Statues Acclaimed by the Buddha Himself

(two excerpts)

Klemens Karlsson (2009): Tai Khun Buddhism And Ethnic-Religious Identity, Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 10:1, 75-83.

"There are several stories told all over the Buddhist world about Buddha images made at the time of the Buddha. The Chinese pilgrims Faxian and Xuan Zang retold these stories after they visited India in the fifth and seventh centuries. In China there is a popular story about the Udayana image, created for King Udayana, who ruled in Kausambi during the lifetime of the Buddha. Another popular story is about a sandalwood image made for King Prasenajit of Kosala. It is told that the king asked Moggallāna, one of the followers of the Buddha, to take 32 craftsmen and go to the Tāvātimsa heaven to make an image of the Buddha, because at that time he was visiting his mother there. According to Theravāda tradition, the story of the sandalwood image is told both in the northern Thai chronicle Jinakālamālā (Ratanapañña Thera 1978) and in a local Jātaka story, the Vaṭṭaṅgulirāja-jātaka³ (Jaini 1986 103–121).

The Mahāmuni Buddha in Mandalay has a supposed connection to the Buddha himself. The tradition places the construction of the image as far back as the time of the Buddha. The Buddha breathed life into the image after it was constructed by Indra (Gutman 2001, 29–39). The story is therefore expressing the view that the so-called historical Buddha visited Burma and that the image is a true and exact copy of him. Therefore, the Mahāmuni Buddha is believed to be alive and may act as an adviser to the ruler that is in possession of it, thus serving to legitimize that ruler.

The image has been seized in wars and is still used in legitimizing political power, providing protection for the country and the military rulers. It was originally constructed in Arakan (Rakhine State), the western part of today's Myanmar. It is told that many Burmese kings attacked Arakan with the intention of obtaining the Mahāmuni image. In 1784, after his invasion of Arakan, King Bodawpaya finally took the image to Mandalay, where it still resides. Today it is regarded by the Burmese as a national treasure."

A Burmese wonderland: a tale of travel in Lower and Upper Burma, by C.M. Enriquez, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1922, p.75.

Treasure was poured out for the casting of this wonderful image of Mahamuni, which from that day was the centre of religious and political life in Arakan, the pride of the people, and the envy of their neighbours, whose many invasions were merely attempts to possess themselves of Mahamuni. At last in 1785 the image was carried off by the Burmese to Mandalay where, protected by splendid gates, half buried in gold leaf, it sits to this day in a blaze of electric light upon its flower-laden altar in the Arakan Pagoda. The extraordinary antiquity ascribed to the Mahamuni must, of course, be accepted with reserve. Large images were not cast in India until the 5th century A.D.: and in Burma proper no images at all were made before the 11th century. There is no reference to Mahamuni in any inscription. Its perfect lines, its well developed Mongolian countenance, are evidence against the supreme antiquity claimed for it.

³ This jātika is one of the fifty apocryphal birth stories of the Buddha, which were not included in the collection of Pāli Scriptures approved by the 6th Buddhist Council. See its English translation in "Apocryphal Birth-Stories (Paññāsa-Jātaka)" Vol.2, Tr. by Padmanabh S. Jaini, PTS, Oxford, 2003; pp.103-121.

4. Funeral Umbrellas

If you were a Burmese lay person, then you would perhaps dream about having a yellow umbrella at your funeral. Why? Because this is the umbrella erected in honor for donors of monastery building, or a sponsor of a monk's ordination. As for monks, their funeral is embellished with white umbrellas.



Funeral of an old lady, a monastery donor and
ordination supporter
(photo donated by Dr. Cho Cho Than)



Funeral of a monk
(photo donated by Thathanar Pyu Thet Win Maung)

5. Pay Your Car a Drink, And Get a Drink for Free

Not sure how in other countries, but in Myanmar petrol stations started to award their customers by bottled drinking water. If you buy petrol for over 10 000 Ks, you will be given one bottle of drinking water (1L). If you buy petrol for over 20 000 Ks, you will get two such bottles. I've learned it this month when I travelled from Yangon to Naypyidaw and Mt. Popa – it worked perhaps in every petrol station. Keep a tissue with you, they may be cold and wet all around.

6. Death Everywhere

Just like Dhamma, death is also everywhere. In a *Maraṇassati Sutta* of AN 6.1.2.19 (Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation p.878) we learn right from the Buddha:

"... the bhikkhu who develops mindfulness of death thus: 'May I live just the length of time it takes to chew and swallow a single mouthful of food so that I may attend to the Blessed One's teachings. I could then accomplish much!'; and the one who develops mindfulness of death thus: 'May I live just the length of time it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out, so that I may attend to the Blessed One's teaching. I could then accomplish much!': these are called bhikkhus who dwell heedfully. They develop mindfulness of death keenly for the destruction of the taints."

Not long ago a friend told me, that a black widow (spider) may bite me on penis while at the toilet, and (of course) I may die because of that. A good story for recollecting "death everywhere", but still not as convincing. So far there is apparently no documented case of a man who would die this way. There however happened two cases that may have played role in fabrication of this funny warning. See below –

1. News

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/deadly-spider-bites-mans-penis-on-toilet-worst-fears-realized_us_5720c7d1e4b0f309baef4599

"What happened to a construction worker on a portable toilet in Sydney, Australia, will make your skin crawl. God knows what it made his skin do.

The 21-year-old man was bitten on the penis Wednesday by a poisonous redback spider⁴ at a job site, the BBC reports.

According to a story in the Adelaide Advertiser, paramedics rushed to the scene but the victim got to the hospital on his own.

"He somehow managed to get alternative transport to hospital," an ambulance spokesman says.

The victim was treated and later discharged, the BBC writes."

(This news in other words can be found at <http://www.complex.com/life/2016/04/venomous-spider-bite-penis> and originally at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-36136635> .)

2. Book

"Men's Private Parts: A Pocket Reference to Prostrate, Urologic, and Sex", James Gillbaugh (displayed in books.google.com)

The Penis – Bites

Bites on the penis, whether from a playful sex partner or a dangerous insect, should receive prompt medical attention. Take the case of Doug, a hunter at a deer camp in the hills who was bitten on the penis while using an outhouse. At first the bite felt like a pinprick, but within hours the bite area became stiff and intensely painful. Soon the hunter experienced chills, fever, sweating, nausea, and severe abdominal pain. Fortunately, a doctor was in the camp, and he treated the victim with antivenin for what he recognized as a black widow spider bite. The hunter recovered fully.

Of more than 30,000 species of spiders in the world, fifty are known to bite humans. Two that are deadly are named by their colors, black widow and brown recluse. Both may be found in residential and recreational areas. The black widow, an aggressive spider that will attack on slight provocation, spins its web in darkened places – including outhouses.

Well, then perhaps I may not die because of a spider-bite (if a doctor is nearby), but of course there are enough ways how anyone can die virtually any time at any place. This is well elaborated in the book "Path of Purification", an English translation by ven. Ñāṇamoli of the original "Visuddhimagga" of ven. Ācariya Buddhaghosa. You may download the book here:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/nanamoli/PathofPurification2011.pdf>

and read the treatise in pages 247-259.

⁴ a close relative of black widow

What is not so well elaborated, and what is more the interest of scientists, is the maximum life-span. I shared my musings on this topic already before, so I will just add what is new.

Telomeres

In the free documentary "Inside the Living Body" (available on Youtube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBIYwiktPsQ>) from time 1:27:37 we learn: "Even with a healthy life-style and the best medicine, death is unavoidable. Our DNA makes us what we are. And guides our development. But it also determines how long we live. Every time one of our cells copies itself, it loses a tiny piece from the end of the DNA. After billions of cell divisions the end section is gone. Our cells can't divide any more. Death, like life, is a biological process."

This is very simplified presentation of what doctors know today. According to Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Telomere&oldid=728338345>, retrieved on 6th of July 2016), "a telomere is a region of repetitive nucleotide sequences at each end of a chromosome, which protects the end of the chromosome from deterioration or from fusion with neighboring chromosomes. ... During chromosome replication, the enzymes that duplicate DNA cannot continue their duplication all the way to the end of a chromosome, so in each duplication the end of the chromosome is shortened (this is because the synthesis of Okazaki fragments requires RNA primers attaching ahead on the lagging strand). The telomeres are disposable buffers at the ends of chromosomes which are truncated during cell division; their presence protects the genes before them on the chromosome from being truncated instead. Over time, due to each cell division, the telomere ends become shorter. They are replenished by an enzyme, telomerase reverse transcriptase."

Great. So if we have this "telomerase reverse transcriptase," we are saved from death ... aren't we? According to the website <http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/chromosomes/telomeres/>, "An enzyme named telomerase adds bases to the ends of telomeres. In young cells, telomerase keeps telomeres from wearing down too much. But as cells divide repeatedly, there is not enough telomerase, so the telomeres grow shorter and the cells age."⁵ "Geneticist Richard Cawthon and colleagues at the University of Utah found shorter telomeres are associated with shorter lives. Among people older than 60, those with shorter telomeres were three times more likely to die from heart disease and eight times more likely to die from infectious disease. While telomere shortening has been linked to the aging process, it is not yet known whether shorter telomeres are just a sign of aging – like gray hair – or actually contribute to aging."

⁵ This wonderful "medicine" however plays its role in cancer: "As a cell begins to become cancerous, it divides more often, and its telomeres become very short. If its telomeres get too short, the cell may die. Often times, these cells escape death by making more telomerase enzyme, which prevents the telomeres from getting even shorter. Many cancers have shortened telomeres, including pancreatic, bone, prostate, bladder, lung, kidney, and head and neck. Measuring telomerase may be a way to detect cancer. And if scientists can learn how to stop telomerase, they might be able to fight cancer by making cancer cells age and die." (<http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/chromosomes/telomeres/>) Laboratory research however shows, that increasing of telomerase (by itself) does not cause cancer.

Somebody told me that the Buddha is the greatest doctor. Interestingly, not only that He teaches the medicine for all suffering of the world, but (somehow) His methods often help to solve even those sufferings that are temporary. "Four pioneering randomized control trials, including a total of 190 participants, provided information on the effect of mindfulness meditation on telomerase. A meta-analytic effect size of $d = 0.46$ indicated that mindfulness meditation leads to increased telomerase activity in peripheral blood mononuclear cells. These results suggest the need for further large-scale trials investigating optimal implementation of mindfulness meditation to facilitate telomerase functioning." (<http://www.psyneuen-journal.com/article/S0306-4530%2813%2900453-8/abstract?cc=y=>)

May all beings be happy,

monk Sarana